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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 5 October 2016



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 5 octobre 2016

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

Protecting Interns and Creating
a Learning Economy Act, 2016

Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Loi de 2016 sur la protection
des stagiaires et la création
d'une économie d'apprentissage

Chair: Monte McNaughton
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Monte McNaughton
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Wednesday 5 October 2016

Mercredi 5 octobre 2016

*The committee met at 1301 in committee room 1.*PROTECTING INTERNS AND CREATING
A LEARNING ECONOMY ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES STAGIAIRES ET LA CRÉATION
D'UNE ÉCONOMIE D'APPRENTISSAGE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. We're here to discuss Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE
EMPLOYEES UNION

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We have public deputations today, and our first presenter will be OPSEU, Warren Thomas, president.

Each presenter will have five minutes for their presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning from each party, and we'll begin with the official opposition.

I know you know the routine, sir, so whenever you're ready.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Thanks, Mr. McNaughton.

I have with me today Clarke Eaton. Clarke is an assistant in my office. He is also a graduate of business school and understands a lot of this stuff, so maybe he'll jump in.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Bill 64 and the important issue of protecting vulnerable workers from being exploited through unpaid internships.

Protecting vulnerable workers is close to the hearts of OPSEU's 130,000 members, from our support of the Urban Worker Project to the historic organizing drive we just completed of precarious part-time support staff in Ontario colleges, the largest organizing drive in Canadian history.

When I look around, I'm disturbed to see that unpaid or underpaid internships have become the new normal for too many of our young people. Internships are increasing—there are an estimated 100,000 in Toronto alone—while entry-level positions seem to be disappearing and a youth unemployment rate in the mid-teens is leaving youth particularly vulnerable to being taken advantage of. Despite this, we also know the important role of work-integrated learning in preparing our youth to succeed in the workplaces of the future.

That's why I'm so pleased to see the contents of this bill. This is not a rejection of internships, nor is it an embrace of the Wild West model we see today. It's a balanced approach that asks how we as a society can best support paid and meaningful internships that position our young people for success, while protecting them from exploitation. I'd like to touch on a couple of ways the bill does just that.

First, it identifies the need for a council with representatives from all interested parties to advise the minister on how to create and sustain a vibrant, challenging and empowering work-integrated learning environment. OPSEU, as the bargaining agent for college faculty and support staff, would be happy to participate on this council and contribute to what will be important discussions.

Second, the proposals to extend the protections of the Employment Standards Act to all students in these programs are desperately needed. Basic protections like limits on hours of work and the right to raise concerns with the Ministry of Labour without reprisal should be there for everyone, particularly for young people just learning what to expect in the workplace.

Sadly, this need is illustrated by the case of one young co-op student, Adam Keunen, who was killed in 2014 while working in a Niagara region auto recycler. One young person who will never come home from work is one too many. We need to ensure that there are no more.

Interns, who feel they need the connections and references their employer offers and who see many of their peers unable to find work at all, aren't likely to complain. That's why we need the government to act to protect them. I'm a parent myself and I know how I'd feel if it was my child being exploited—I imagine many of you can as well. With this bill, we have an opportunity to act to protect all our youth.

I thank you both for the opportunity to speak to you today and in particular for giving your time to an issue

that will make such a difference for some of Ontario's most vulnerable workers. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thank you very much. We'll move to Mr. Coe of the official opposition.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair. Through you to Mr. Thomas: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Let's turn for a moment, if we could, please, to the council on work-integrated learning. Where do you see the opportunities for them to make the post-secondary education system stronger?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, I think if you brought in representatives from labour, business, government and agencies that have co-op students and educational facilities, you could sit down and you could identify all the issues on the table. You could work collaboratively as a group to come up with solutions, which would, I think, protect young workers and make it uniform and make it fair to everybody. Then, too, employers would know what to expect if you bring in an intern—to give some guidance.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you for that answer. A supplementary through you, Chair, please: Are there aspects of the bill that you think need to be strengthened, in your reading of it?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: We kind of like it the way it is.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Very well. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Is that all the questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: That's it.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Okay. We'll move to Ms. Sattler of the third party.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation and for your support of my private member's bill. I appreciate that very much.

I wanted to ask you, as representatives of OPSEU and Ontario government employees—I am very interested in positioning the government as a model employer and showing leadership to the province in providing these kinds of paid work-integrated learning opportunities for students. Is the government doing this, as far as you are aware? What opportunities do you see for the government to play more of a leadership role in creating these opportunities?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, I don't see where interns in the government are paid anything. They just do it at their own expense. If somebody has an example of where they do it, I would be happy to hear it.

In OPSEU, we bring in a couple of interns annually. One is an articling student. But we do bring in students who want to engage in the union to learn things. Our policy is that we pay them entry-level wages. They don't come in for free, and we pay them. How much work they do is irrelevant, in my mind. They're there to learn and to help out and to bring perspective in some campaigns, particularly young people. So we have interns, but we pay them.

If the government is going to use interns, they should pay them at least some sort of entry-level wage, because you're coming into a workplace—I can't imagine what it would cost to live in Toronto if you were coming from university, living away and then having to spend another year. Clarkie's got lots of friends that are doing paid internships right now.

I spoke to a group of business students about a year ago—70 business students at Ivey school of business. I asked them one question. I said, "How many here are looking forward to doing an unpaid internship?" Guess what? Not one of them put their hand up.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The other question I wanted to ask is around barriers, both to employers and to students. Do you have a sense of what some of those barriers might be, why workplaces might not be able to bring a student into the workplace?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Well, if you look at the apprenticeship model, it's difficult to find apprenticeship spaces because people who are trying to earn a living are expected to mentor people who are trying to learn so they can make a living. So in my mind, if you were to strengthen the apprenticeship model, for example, to where a business takes interns and treats them well and has a good program, a robust program that levels the playing field for everybody, perhaps you could give business a tax credit. Maybe half of that tax credit could be that they have to pay the intern something to get by on.

I think there are ways to figure it out, sister, that would work for everybody. But I do really believe the idea of the council: to sit down and talk about things and create—get input from all sides, because I do know some business leaders through pension plans and stuff and they wrestle with this themselves—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): I'm sorry to cut you off. I have to move to the government now.

Is there a government member who's going to ask questions for three minutes?

Ms. Soo Wong: I was just waiting to see who's going to ask. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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Mr. Thomas, thank you for being here today. There are two parts to this bill, one dealing with the labour law and the other one is the post-secondary piece. Specifically, I want to ask—you're dealing with a diverse learner, and particularly those young people at risk and those individuals with disabilities. I know you would probably support the government's position on work-integrated learning, because I think the minister, as well as the throne speech, talked about experiential learning; that's what an internship is all about. How do we provide stronger strategies and strengthen the bill to support these learners, especially when we have such diverse learners, and those who are learning online?

Mr. Smokey Thomas: That is a difficult question to answer. I can tell you right now from talking to my members that there are models out there. There is stuff in the Human Rights Code. There is labour law legislation.

But there are some models in some of the colleges where you do offer supports for students with disabilities, but they don't get that support when they go out into work. They do sometimes get into work placements. There are models around that I think you could take a look at—best practices, if you will—and fold them in and make it work.

I'll give you just one quick example of where I think we can come together to work with labour, with business and that. I sit on a task force right now with two cabinet ministers on violence in health care. I was really a doubting Thomas at first but it's going quite well.

So I think that if there was a council, in many ways we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We can go out and find best practices in high schools, universities and colleges that are there already—plus, with progressive employers that want to help people get jobs.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thanks for your presentation.

Mr. Smokey Thomas: Thanks.

CANADIAN INTERN ASSOCIATION

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We'll now call and hear from the Canadian Intern Association. If you would just please state your name for Hansard. You have five minutes for your presentation, followed by questions beginning with Ms. Sattler of the third party.

Ms. Ella Henry: Sure. My name is Ella Henry and I'm with the Canadian Intern Association. The Canadian Intern Association is a not-for-profit organization that advocates against the exploitation of interns, and we aim to improve internship and work-integrated-learning opportunities for young people.

Stronger protections are certainly needed for interns and for students completing work placements and we welcome the changes that have been proposed in this bill. The reality of work-integrated-learning programs on the ground for students often greatly differs from the ideals that are expressed by policy-makers and by educators.

A substantial amount of work-integrated-learning programs do not provide any enhanced learning opportunities. Instead, we see students who are trapped in dead-end jobs where they are receiving minimal, or no pay. They're carrying out monotonous tasks that are unrelated to their educational program and to the future careers that they aspire to attain.

These internships and other emerging forms of work-integrated learning can be contrasted to the apprenticeship and co-op models where we have heavily regulated programs. They are strictly supervised. They are generally paid, and they do, effectively, serve as a bridge from the classroom into the world of work.

Over the past two decades, we've witnessed the explosive growth of unpaid internships in Canada. The best estimates we have place the total number of unpaid internships in Ontario at approximately 100,000 annually, so we do need more oversight to ensure that the work-

integrated learning opportunities are offering real benefits for students.

We do support the creation of this advisory committee, but we also believe that there needs to be specific regulation and oversight by the Ministry of Labour in terms of these work-integrated-learning and internship programs offered through secondary and post-secondary institutions.

We would propose that the current six-point criteria that's used for the trainee exclusion under section 1(2) of the Employment Standards Act be applied as a test to the secondary and post-secondary student exception. In that way, work-integrated learning would only be exempt from all of the requirements of the Employment Standards Act, including minimum wage, if it was actually to the benefit of students. This would help weed out work-integrated learning programs where high school, college and university students are completing unpaid work placements, who are doing things such as cleaning hotel rooms, serving in a restaurant or filing, which are indistinguishable from paid summer employment they might have or from paid entry-level positions they might have. We could also have the Ministry of Labour oversee the universities and colleges' implementation of their internship and work-integrated learning programs.

We're pleased that Bill 64 will ensure that students completing internships and work placements are covered by many sections of the ESA that they are not currently covered by, particularly hours of work and the ability to file complaints and protections against reprisal.

We do have several concrete recommendations to extend protections where interns need them most. First, the general limit on hours of work in the ESA may be too broad to apply to interns. We need to recognize the fact that interns are often undertaking paid employment as well, at the same time, in addition to their part-time or full-time studies. We would suggest that there be a lower restriction on the number of hours that can be done in an unpaid internship placement through an academic program.

Second, I think it's very important that we have a prohibition on overnight work for interns and students completing work placements. This would help prevent tragedies like the death of Aaron Murray. I know the previous speaker also referenced a student who had been killed in a co-op placement; that was not the only student who has been killed in a workplace. Aaron Murray was a 21-year-old student who was killed in a car crash in 2014 while driving home after his unpaid placement as a security guard overnight. He'd worked the previous afternoon at a paid shift at McDonald's.

A similar incident occurred in Alberta in 2013 when Andy Ferguson, a 22-year-old, was killed in a car crash on his way home from a long overnight shift at his unpaid practicum. In that regard, we think that a specific prohibition on overnight hours in these work placements would certainly be helpful.

But generally, we do support the changes in this bill and we thank the honourable member for bringing those forward. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great timing. We'll move to Ms. Sattler from the third party.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation and for participating in this public input process. You talked about the proliferation of unpaid internships, as many as 100,000 in the province, and that the government has undertaken a couple of blitzes. I wondered if you have any comment on the effectiveness of the government's approach so far. Do you think that it is making a difference in terms of reducing the number of illegal unpaid internships in the province?

Ms. Ella Henry: Certainly, I do think the move to have enforcement blitzes, where the Ministry of Labour proactively goes out and enforces the Employment Standards Act, is incredibly useful. Interns are not likely to file employment standards complaints. We know that employees generally don't file employment standards complaints while they're at work. Most complaints are filed after people have left the job. For interns in particular, you're not being paid. The only benefit you're getting out of that is a possible reference. After-the-fact complaints-based enforcement is wholly ineffective. Proactive enforcement is effective and we do see some sort of short-term results with the blitzes, particularly when they're targeted in certain industries.

We would like to see a move to a proactive enforcement model more generally so that this doesn't happen once a year in a particular industry but that it happens regularly and is a standard method of enforcement.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Do I have time?

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): You've got just over a minute.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: One of the things in the bill is a legal definition of work-integrated learning. You talked about the reality of "will" versus the policy. I wondered if you had had an opportunity to look at that legal definition of work-integrated learning and if you had any feedback on that.

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Ms. Ella Henry: Yes, I have had an opportunity to take a look at it and I think it is useful to have that definition there as it does assist us in separating out actual work-integrated learning, because there are certainly lots of programs within colleges and universities that are beneficial for students and that help make that transition from school to the workplace. We'd want to be able to make that the standard, and weed out the large number of work placements that are increasingly being offered that don't actually have any academic or employment benefit for the student.

In addition to having the definition, we also need a mechanism for enforcing that. Again, if you were to leave it, for example, for a student to bring a—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): I'm sorry to have to cut you off.

We're going to move to the government. Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: One area that I wonder if you've looked at is this whole area of co-op students. As you know, there are tens of thousands of students across On-

tario who are in co-op programs that are hosted and organized by high schools, and also our colleges. What has been your experience with their situation as far as protecting their rights and protecting their workplace situation?

Ms. Ella Henry: Certainly, I think the co-op model is the preferred model, where students are doing paid work placements. There are problems even then, and that's why we need some of these changes to bring some of the sections of the ESA to cover students who are in those placements. That needs to be changed.

Another worrying trend that I've seen: I was talking to a group of high school co-op students not too long ago, and I believe in the class, one or two of them were doing paid positions. This was called a co-op program. It may have been intended that the positions were paid, but increasingly, we're moving to this model where even co-op programs are only offering students these unpaid positions.

So we need to attack it on two fronts. One is ensuring that they're paid, and the second is ensuring all of the other regulations around hours of work and holidays, that a mechanism for enforcing that is available.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think Mr. Thomas was referring to this in part: There's just a real challenge in getting meaningful work, even if you're skilled. You're maybe in one of the trades or you've been educated, and then you want to get a job and the employer says, "Well, you've got great education and great training, but you have no experience." So they tell them, "You've got to get experience." The young person is almost put into a no-win situation. They can't get a job because they don't have the experience, so what they do is they try and say, "Listen, I'll come in as an intern. I'll volunteer." How do you deal with that?

Ms. Ella Henry: That's precisely the reason that we have minimum wages, so that employees who maybe don't have the bargaining power on their own to be paid those minimum wages are protected. Because what that does is it sort of lowers the floor for everyone. It doesn't help with youth unemployment; in fact, it increases it. You've now got some companies who are paying their employees competing with other companies who have a bunch of people working for free. That's not fair to them either. I think by establishing that floor and enforcing it, we'll level the playing field and improve those opportunities for all students. I know that—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): I'm sorry again to cut you off. We're out of time. We're going to move to Mr. Bailey and the official opposition.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Welcome, Ms. Henry. I have a couple of questions, so two parts here: I've heard from a number of students who are co-op, interns etc.—however we want to frame it—who felt that they went to employee placements and then found they were doing menial-type work: opening envelopes, photocopying. Do you see provisions in this bill that would negate that and allow these young people, these men and women, to get proper experience?

Ms. Ella Henry: I think there are a couple of things in this bill that would help with that. One is that when you get rid of some of these unpaid positions and make them paid positions, the employer has an incentive to find actual useful work for someone to do, instead of sticking them in a corner—if they're paying them.

The other useful thing that this bill does with the advisory council is that it brings together folks from the business, labour and education communities to talk about how to better craft these placements so that they are useful for students and help train them and get them to a point where they're then useful to the employers after they've graduated.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Another issue that we've heard from employers is the cost to develop these work-integrated learning positions. Bill 64 calls for the creation of this website. Could you speak to how the creation of this website could lower the costs or make it more palatable for industry, business, unions or whoever to take part in these programs?

Ms. Ella Henry: Certainly. I think that there is a cost to hiring employees to do your work. That's going to be there. If you can work to create effective programs, it reduces costs for everyone in the long run, because you have students who are doing useful work for the employer. They're gaining skills so that, when they go out into the workforce, after they're employed, perhaps there's less of a training cost for employers at that point.

Certainly, if there's more integration and connection between the actual academic programs and the work placements and the jobs that we need people to be doing, then, over the long term, we're going to reduce those costs in terms of training and hiring people.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Great. Thank you very much for your presentation.

DR. GRETCHEN KERR

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We will now move to our final presenter, Gretchen Kerr. As with the other presenters, you have five minutes for your presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning, starting with the government this time.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Thank you very much for this opportunity. I come to you from the University of Toronto faculty of kinesiology and physical education, where I serve as a professor and vice-dean.

I'd like to thank you very much for this opportunity to contribute to this discussion, and I certainly applaud you on the work that you're doing. My presentation today will be specific to those work-integrated learning opportunities that are approved and facilitated by academic institutions.

As you know, the work-integrated learning discussions have increased in light of the changing landscape of higher education. More specifically, there's a growing recognition of the value of learning outside of the traditional classroom. There are greater calls for making

learning more relevant for students and to extend beyond the traditional classroom to offer diverse learning experiences and engage students within the community, something we're hearing from students quite a bit.

As a result, we believe that work-integrated learning opportunities have the potential to offer valuable educational experiences because they enable students to link practice and theory, and they offer opportunities to learn skills and competencies that may not be available in the traditional academic setting and may help them in their future careers.

The discussions around work-integrated learning have focused a great deal on questions around the appropriate type of learning experience, the location, how long they should be and whether they should be paid or not. If I had one take-home message to offer you today, it would be that the question that we should be wrestling with is how to ensure that these work-integrated learning opportunities are educational for students.

Why is this the case? Well, as we've heard already, there are some learning opportunities that do not meet educational standards, where we have students completing menial tasks. Yet, there are others who are accomplished in their fields and refer back to how important the work-integrated learning opportunity was for opening doors and setting them on a particular career path. So there are diverse possibilities as a result of work-integrated learning, whether they're paid or not.

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So the message is that work-integrated learning has the potential to offer many, many benefits, but that these benefits cannot be assumed and they're not automatic. In other words, not all experiences are educational, whether they're paid or not.

In one study that we conducted with colleagues at the University of Toronto, looking at close to 400 internship programs across universities and colleges within the province, the majority did not meet the standards and were not consistent with experiential learning theory.

How can we ensure that students are learning at all, let alone learning what we intend them to learn? One of the ways to do that is to ensure that opportunities are designed purposefully and deliberately in congruence with what we know from research and theory about how to learn most effectively from the field and these types of applied experiences. We have published a practical guide that follows experiential learning theory and offers very concrete examples of how to do this, and we're endeavouring to get copies available for all of you.

To conclude, the quality of work-integrated learning experiences is not determined by the type, the hours worked or the financial gain, but by educational enrichment. As a result, work-integrated learning experiences need to be structured deliberately in congruence with experiential learning theory in order to realize the benefits that these experiences may have for all of the stakeholders involved.

Thank you very much. I'd be happy to take questions.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Thank you very much. We'll move to the government. Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Professor Kerr. You worked with a friend of mine, Bruce Kidd, for a few years.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Yes, I worked with Bruce for a very long time.

Mr. Mike Colle: He's an exceptional teacher and athlete too. The younger guys around here wouldn't remember Bruce Kidd, but—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Sorry to digress.

Anyway, Professor, you really caught my interest, because I know that when people talk about internships and the need to protect interns and interns' learning, they always talk about, "Well, you've got to pay them," but you're saying that's not the bottom line. The bottom line is making sure they have a meaningful and fruitful work experience, where there are measurable benchmarks which demonstrate that they've learned something from their experience. Is that paraphrasing what you're saying?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: For any academic institution to be partnering in a work-integrated learning experience, there is a primary focus for us on educational enrichment. That's the purpose of our involvement in these experiences. If they are paid for these, that's wonderful. But the primary focus, whether they're paid or not, is, are they learning anything, and secondly, are they learning what we hope they're going to learn?

Mr. Mike Colle: In this bill—I commend MPP Sattler for taking this on, because it is quite challenging to put in these parameters and these guidelines so that you meet the learning requirements and the labour relations requirements, and then that they're compensated, if they are doing work that requires compensation. So how does this bill give the tools to do this? Or do we have to do something more to ensure that every employer, if they're going to bring in, whether it be an academic institution like yours or not—have certain standards or guidelines that they have to meet before they have a legitimate internship position?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Let me preface the answer by saying that, in addition to the educational focus, of course, things like safety are paramount—beyond that, I think working with the partnership between the academic institution and the partner organization around ways in which to make that experience truly educational, and the measures, the tools, the strategies that can be incorporated to help ensure that.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): We're going to move to the opposition now and Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Dr. Kerr, for being here. I enjoyed reading your paper that you published in December. It's consistent with what I've been hearing as I travel the province and campuses, and occasionally the skilled trades sector. I have a question, though. The bill defines work-integrated learning, as it should, but then it goes on to establish criteria to ensure quality workplace programs. You've looked at those criteria, I'm sure. Are you satisfied with the extent and breadth of those criteria? Would there be anything that you would suggest to us be added?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Given that you're asking an academic, I would offer a suggestion to strengthen the criteria identified: to ensure educational quality. There's certainly references to it. More could be said, I think, to ensure that the goal of this is educational.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Chair, another question, please.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Continue.

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the council's mandate, it makes recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. One of the recommendations would be on how to engage more employers in providing paid work-integrated learning experiences. In your experience, and not only in an academic setting but in discussing this important topic with employers, do you think this goes far enough? How would you engage employers?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Employers tend to greatly value associations with universities and colleges, in part because it's a two-way relationship. So not only do the students learn from the partnerships with industry or business, but their own employees and staff members learn from the students they bring in, who bring in brand new ideas and so on, and the faculty members who are supervising them. It's a wonderful way for industry and business to stay abreast of the recent developments and research in their areas. Ideally, it benefits all partners equally.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Do you think part of the challenge here is, with the universities in particular, reaching out and engaging employers in a more robust way about experiential learning and co-op placements? Because it's not been typical over the years that there has been that type of partnership. As a result of that, it's added to the skills mismatch.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Interestingly, the academic environment has a long history of offering such experiences. They just have not been framed as work-integrated learning experiences. The university is eager to move in this direction—

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Ms. Kerr, I'm really sorry to have to cut you off. We're going to move to Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you so much, Dr. Kerr, for being here. I said this to you before the meeting and I'll say it publicly as well: A Practical Guide for Work-Integrated Learning is amazing. I know that it's been welcomed by the sector—very useful, practical tools.

I was interested in hearing your reference to this study of 400 placements in Ontario, work-integrated learning placements. You said the majority of these placements were not consistent with educational theory. Were these across both university and college? Can you give us a little bit more detail about the study that was conducted?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: It was, first of all, limited to programs that were identified as internships. They varied, but they were all identified as internships. There were 44 colleges and universities represented, and we looked at 369 internship programs. While aspects of the internship programs met some criteria of experiential-learning theory, they did not meet all of the criteria.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: And this was a cross-section of institutions from all regions of the province?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Absolutely. We were very careful to include geographical representation, colleges and universities.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: That's very interesting.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: There's a report on the HEQCO website.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The other thing I would be very appreciative of is you looking at the definition of "will" that's embedded in the legislation—and if you have specific recommendations on how to strengthen that language, that would be great.

When I was developing it, I was looking at some of the work that's been done in Australia, but I would love to hear your thoughts.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I'd be happy to.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The final question is, I wondered if you wanted to complete what you were about to say to MPP Coe when you talked about universities' interests in moving in this direction.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Universities are looking at diverse ways to teach and learn and that leads us into learning outside of the classroom. It's a different generation of students and this generation needs to know that what they're learning is relevant. The students are demanding integration within the communities, which the universities are happy to comply with. We're only strengthened by community partnerships, and we're happy to refute the ivory tower reputation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): Well timed. I'm at the three-minute mark. Thank you very much for your presentation. I'd like to thank all presenters today.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Monte McNaughton): For the committee, we'll be meeting two weeks today. For that session, we have four presenters so far who have asked to present. We still have some time.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1342.

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